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Item 26 of the preliminary list*

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Letter dated 28 May 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour, on behalf of the Chairman-in-Office of the Council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), to enclose the text of a framework for cooperation and coordination between the United Nations Secretariat and the CSCE, which was signed by you and the Chairman of the Council of the CSCE on 26 May 1993 (see annex II, appendix).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for it to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 26 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Peter OSVALD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Sweden
to the United Nations

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* A/48/50.

ANNEX I

Letter dated 26 May 1993 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Chairman-in-Office of the Council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

With reference to General Assembly resolution 47/10 of 2 December 1992, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe", I attach the text which represents the outcome of our consultations on this matter.

I have the honour to inform you that I accept the arrangements described in this attachment (see annex II, appendix), which will constitute, upon receipt of your acceptance in writing, the framework for our mutual cooperation and coordination.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

ANNEX II

Letter dated 26 May 1993 from the Chairman-in-Office of the Council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I have the honour to inform you that I accept the arrangements described in the appendix to the present letter, which will constitute the framework for our mutual cooperation and coordination.

(Signed) Margaretha AF UGGLAS
Chairman of the Council

APPENDIX

Framework for cooperation and coordination between the United Nations Secretariat and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman of the Council of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,

Desirous of continuing and further strengthening the cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in all fields of mutual interest, in particular those relating to maintaining international peace and security and promoting respect for human rights within the CSCE area, and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as decisions by the CSCE Council and the CSCE Committee of Senior Officials,

Have, as part of the continuing development of mutual relations, agreed to the following:

(1) The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE Council and their respective representatives will hold consultations on a regular basis in particular on cooperation and coordination of activities of common interest.

(2) The Permanent Mission to the United Nations of the CSCE participating State holding the Office of Chairman will serve as the point of contact of the CSCE and as the representative of the Chairman-in-Office in contacts with the United Nations Secretariat in New York and at Geneva on appropriate activities of common interest. The CSCE delegation of the CSCE participating State holding the office of Chairman, the CSCE Secretary-General and other CSCE institutions in Vienna will serve as points of contact in Vienna.

(3) Official information on relevant issues, including documents and decisions as well as specific reports, will be exchanged, as appropriate, between the United Nations and the CSCE.

(4) The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman-in-Office of the CSCE, assisted or represented, as appropriate, by the Secretary-General of the CSCE and other institutions of the CSCE, undertake to maintain close contact to ensure coordination, complementarity, possible mutual support and to avoid duplication in the planning and carrying out of activities. This relates in particular to long-term efforts to prevent conflicts and promote political settlement of conflicts.

(5) Such contacts should take the form of:

- Consultation on the preparation, initiation and implementation of fact finding and other missions e.g. timing, composition, terms of reference;

- Exchange of information between United Nations and CSCE representatives in the field on the situation in the area of their responsibility and other relevant information including movements and other activities of missions.

(6) In addition cooperation may cover:

- Exchange of information in preparing reports of missions;

- Examination of the possibility of joint reports;

- Examination of the possibilities of various kinds of mutual assistance in the field;

- Examination of the possibility of joint missions.

(7) The forms of cooperation referred to above (paras. 5 and 6) may be applicable to peace-keeping operations in the CSCE region.

(8) The CSCE, in planning and carrying out peace-keeping activities, may, as appropriate, draw upon the technical assistance and advice of the United Nations.

(9) In principle, the United Nations and the CSCE will bear their respective costs related to joint activities. Whenever necessary a precise division of costs related to a joint activity will be agreed upon.

(10) Letters of Understanding should be concluded as appropriate for each coordinated area of activity.

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QUESTION OF EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION ON AND INCREASE IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Letter dated 1 June 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the views of the Government of Mexico on the item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, in accordance with its resolution 47/62 and in connection with item 33 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Manuel TELLO
Permanent Representative of Mexico
to the United Nations

* A/48/50.

ANNEX

Views of the Government of Mexico on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council (General Assembly resolution 47/62)

1. As a sponsor of General Assembly resolution 47/62 of 11 December 1992, the Government of Mexico welcomes the decision by the Secretary-General to consult Member States as provided for in paragraph 1 of that resolution. The Government of Mexico believes that any action taken on this item must be carefully thought out and conform strictly to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, so as to ensure that any amendments that may be adopted have the general agreement of the States Members of the Organization, including the five permanent members of the Security Council.

2. It is in this spirit and out of a desire to make a constructive contribution to this process that the Government of Mexico transmits the following comments on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, which outline its main concerns in this regard.

General considerations

3. In 1963, the main reason for increasing the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council from 6 to 10 was the need to reflect in the Council the increase in the number of States Members of the United Nations. The Member States now number 183 and the composition of the Security Council must be altered so as to strike a balance between the membership of the Security Council and that of the Organization as a whole.

4. According to paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter, the Council, in carrying out its duties, acts on behalf of all the Member States. The Council's composition must therefore be more representative if the legitimacy of its action is not to be eroded.

5. The increase in the membership of the United Nations has resulted in an imbalance in the geographical distribution of non-permanent seats on the Council, creating an unfair situation in which one regional group in particular is over-represented, to the detriment of participation by countries from other regional groups.

6. The composition of the Security Council must be truly representative of the entire membership of the United Nations, both numerically and geographically, in order to avoid placing one group of States at an advantage.

7. In addition, the dramatic changes witnessed world wide in recent years have caused new players to emerge whose responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security should be made commensurate with the influence they wield in international relations.

8. Lastly, together with altering the composition of the Security Council, its functioning and working methods must be reviewed so that, independently of the guarantees provided in the Charter and in the Council's provisional rules of procedure for the participation of non-permanent members in Council decision-making and deliberations, the extent to which non-permanent members really participate in and influence these processes is increased. Communication between the Security Council and the other principal organs of the United Nations must also be improved.

Composition

9. Given the increase in the membership of the United Nations, consideration should be given to the advisability of broadening the composition of the Security Council to make it more representative, bearing in mind that any numerical increase in the Council's membership should be such as to enable it to discharge its duties expeditiously and effectively.

10. The criteria for Security Council membership set forth in paragraph 1 of Article 23 of the Charter of the United Nations remain valid. The criterion of Members' contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security should be interpreted broadly and should not refer only to the contribution of troops to United Nations peace-keeping operations or to collective action authorized by the Security Council. At the same time, any review of these criteria will have to be carried out on the understanding that the composition of the Council must reflect equitable geographical distribution, both in the allocation of non-permanent seats and in the Council's overall composition.

11. The composition of the Security Council must take into account the emergence of new players, the transformation of the international agenda and the new nature of relations among groups of countries. In order to be able to reflect this new reality in the Council's composition, the possibility of creating other categories and procedures for participation in the Council could be considered. The Council's composition must, in any case, be representative of global and regional interests.

Functioning and working methods

12. Ever since 1945, the Government of Mexico has regarded the veto as an undemocratic institution, even though its existence is recognized in the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, Mexico believes that new ways must be considered of regulating the exercise of the veto so that no permanent member on its own can block the Council's decisions and resolutions.

13. In addition to reviewing the composition of the Council, thorough consideration must be given to improving its working methods and its relations with other organs, particularly the General Assembly. Accordingly, the idea that the Council is answerable to the entire membership of the United Nations, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter, must be reinforced.

14. The annual report which that provision requires the Security Council to submit to the General Assembly must be more than just a list of facts; it must contain a substantiated analysis of the decisions taken by the Council on each issue. In addition, one way of strengthening relations with the General

Assembly might be for the Council to submit reports more frequently (quarterly) to the Assembly for consideration, without prejudice to the annual or special reports referred to in paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter. A mechanism should also be established, perhaps including the appointment of a special rapporteur of the Security Council, to ensure full compliance with the provisions of that Article.

15. Now that the obstacles which paralysed the Security Council for so long have been removed, the time has come to adopt definitive rules of procedure.

16. Although increasingly frequent use is being made of the mechanisms provided by the Charter to ensure that the Security Council assumes its peace-keeping responsibilities, this does not alter the fact that the primary obligation in this regard is the duty of Member States to settle their disputes by peaceful means. Any change in the Security Council would require improving existing mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes and devising such new ones as may be necessary.

17. Furthermore, particular attention should be paid to ensuring respect for the competence which the Charter assigns to each of the principal organs of the United Nations, especially the functions entrusted to the General Assembly as regards the maintenance of international peace and security. A balance must be struck between the General Assembly and the Security Council in the discharge of functions in this sphere.

18. The process of reflection which began with resolution 47/62 must be pursued and expanded by holding consultations within the framework of the General Assembly, the object being to prepare the launching of a process of amendment of the Charter of the United Nations to coincide with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
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ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 44/78 of 8 December 1989, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with Member States, a report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas and submit it to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session, through the Economic and Social Council.

2. The General Assembly also called upon Member States to make use of the report and the main conclusions and recommendations of the International Seminar on Women and Rural Development: Programmes and Projects, which was held at Vienna from 22 to 26 May 1989 (see A/44/516, annex), and to endeavour to reflect them, as appropriate, in national development strategies, paying special attention to: (a) setting up or strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women; (b) identifying and formulating more comprehensive priority development projects aimed at improving the situation of rural women and integrating them into national development plans at all levels; and (c) taking measures to give rural women broader access to material and financial resources, to promote the establishment and strengthening of associations of rural women.

3. Measures to improve the situation of women in rural areas have been discussed subsequently in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. In its resolution 47/174 of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly, recalling Economic and Social Council resolutions 1991/64 and 1992/53, welcomed the adoption of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women by the Summit on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women, held at Geneva on 25 and 26 February 1992. Those discussions have been taken into account in the preparation of the present report.

4. In order to consult with Governments on the issue, a note verbale was sent to all Member States on 25 November 1992. The replies received from Member States 1/ have also been incorporated in the present report.

5. Recognizing that women living in rural areas are often critical contributors to the family's food supply, this report aims to analyse recent trends in rural development policies, with particular attention to developing countries, in order to identify the causes of successful implementation of rural development strategies that have contributed to an improvement of the situation of rural women during the past decade, and to analyse unsuccessful projects and explore the reasons for their failure. In the analysis of recent trends, three crucial elements of rural development strategies are examined: (a) building/strengthening institutional support; (b) human resources development strategies; and (c) implementation of measures which would give rural women broader access to and control of productive resources.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF RURAL WOMEN

6. One of the most disturbing trends is a sharp increase in the incidence of poverty among rural women. There is a growing awareness that poverty has a significant gender dimension, which helps to explain why and how the situation of women and men differ in rural areas. Integration of gender concerns in the

planning process would help policy makers at all levels better to understand the different experiences of women and men. Unless those differences are taken into account in the process of policy making and implementation of programmes and projects, the causes of poverty and disadvantaged conditions of rural women cannot be adequately understood or dealt with.

7. Women, particularly those who are resource poor and living in rural areas, tend to be doubly disadvantaged because of their dual need to earn a living and to provide care for their family members, given that these tasks are not equitably shared. Faced by formidable barriers to access to other productive resources, their labour is the single resource at their disposal. However, women in rural areas tend to have little control over the uses of their own labour, owing to non-reciprocal labour arrangements with male family members, subsumption in male-controlled production processes, norms that restrict their access to paid labour, and a smaller cash income relative to that of men and hence the inability to hire labour. These factors, taken together, tend to make their work invisible to family members, and to society as a whole. Invisibility of rural women's work indirectly exacerbates the existing gender inequality at the household level, contributing to an intergenerational transmission of poverty and deprivation, thus perpetuating a vicious circle.

8. Microlevel policies directed at changes within the household, such as those intended to increase women's access to credit and to income-generating activities, should be based on macrolevel changes in the society as a whole. A recognition that gender inequalities within the household are linked to gender inequalities at the societal level has important policy implications. It suggests that, in order to bring about a sustainable improvement in the situation of rural women, institutionalized inequalities between women and men at the societal level must first be addressed, such as those to be found in the legal system and in the occupational and wage structure.

9. All individuals, women jointly with men, should have a voice in the social demands with regard to the allocation and use of resources. In order that women, particularly those living in rural areas, benefit from the process of development, it is necessary to ensure that they are given equal opportunities to participate in the process. In that respect, empowerment of women, through the elimination of the gender-based social structures and relations that constrain women, becomes an important issue in the formulation of national and international development strategies.

10. In the past, the bulk of assistance to rural women was in the form of public goods such as health services, education and family planning, which often implied an assumption that women are passive dependents of the State. A first step towards sustainable improvement in the situation of rural women is a change in the concept of public programmes. It is essential that Governments and the international community concerned with rural development incorporate gender issues into the formulation, design, planning and implementation of their policies and programmes, which includes the recognition of women as principal economic actors.

11. Integration of the concerns of rural women into development goals lies at the core of any strategy that seeks to improve the situation of rural women. Incorporation of gender issues into national planning requires cooperation

between Governments, national machineries, women's groups, non-governmental organizations and the international community.

12. During the Third United Nations Development Decade (1981-1990), which was characterized by a widespread imposition of structural adjustment programmes, the capacity of the State to influence the distribution of goods and services was significantly reduced. This had negative effects on the lives of many people in the developing world, particularly the rural poor. For example, in the 1980s, social spending was reduced proportionately with total public spending, but real government spending per person declined in about two thirds of the countries of Africa and Latin America. 2/ Much of this reduction affected subsidies that were received implicitly through State-financed education, health care and housing, and their reduction affected the poor more, as those subsidies constituted a higher proportion of their income than of the income of those who were better off. 3/

13. Women, particularly those who are resource poor and live in the rural sector, do not enjoy the same relation to their own labour as men do. First, the sexual division of labour decrees certain types of work, such as caring for the other members of the family, to be the social obligation of women. Secondly, rural women's relation to their own labour tends to be conditioned by their relation to men. The structure of gender relations gives men the social power to set limits on the type of work that women may undertake. Moreover, women may not even be able to control fully the fruits of their own labour, which may be appropriated by the male members of their families.

14. There are several links between this situation defined in gender terms and the role of the State. The most complex - and the most critical - for women in general and rural women in particular is the collectivity of norms, laws, ideologies and patterns of action that shape and define societies. One of the key functions of the State is its ability to redefine priorities and form and reform social patterns.

15. Since rural women cannot break out of the vicious circle of poverty on their own, policy makers should take more visible responsibility for improving the situation of rural women by integrating their concerns into national development policies and programmes with particular attention to placing a higher priority on budgetary allocation related to the interests of rural women; strengthening national machineries and establishing institutional linkages among organizations at all levels that are concerned with rural development; improving accessibility of rural women to productive resources, if necessary through reviews of and changes in legislation that constrains rural women's full participation as partners in and beneficiaries of development; and investing in the human resources of rural women, particularly through health and literacy programmes.

16. Increasing awareness by rural women of their rights is an important factor in obtaining sustainable improvement of their situation. Because law-making and adjudication are the result of political processes, increased awareness by women of their rights and knowledge of the legal system, which is termed legal literacy, can help prepare women to participate in those processes. Legal literacy, by developing rural women's capacities to assess the law critically and to interpret the meaning of their rights, helps give them the necessary

political skills to assert those rights and mobilize themselves to remove the substantive and structural obstacles.

17. This also implies that in reviewing legislation to make fundamental women's rights and freedoms justiciable, Governments should consult with women's groups concerned with rural development to allow rural women to define priorities for the content of legal reform. Areas of particular relevance to rural women include family and personal status, land reform, employment, and violence against women.

18. Development of human resources is a crucial part of any strategy that aims to integrate rural women in particular into the process of development. Human resources development should go beyond the issue of human capital formation, in which inputs of health and education services, and of food, are transformed by individuals into saleable assets such as energy and skills, to encompass the reproductive activities of women, for which they receive no monetary compensation. Recognition of women's reproductive role by policy makers is of particular relevance in rural areas where women perform the bulk of the activities that ensure the reproduction and care of the household and community, including child care, health care, food preparation, fuel and water collection and home maintenance.

19. A concept of development that aims to take equally into account the needs of both women and men must therefore address the process of human reproduction as well as the production of commodities and explicitly demonstrate the way the two are interlinked. 4/ The main policy implication of this is the recognition that, to integrate gender analysis at the macroeconomic and sectoral levels of the economy, it is necessary to consider how these abstract categories are linked with the sexual division of labour and income at both the household and societal levels.

20. The evaluation in the present report of programmes and projects implemented in the rural sector in developing countries strongly indicates that gender inequalities within the household are linked to gender inequalities at the societal level; this is manifested by lack of access to both the factors and the means of production and by an unequal wage and employment structure. For example, the invisibility of women's work or difficulties in measuring it in the informal sector indirectly exacerbate the existing gender inequality at the microlevel by devaluing women in general and female children in particular. This has important policy implications: the economic importance of rural women's activities must be fully recognized. Increasing women's access to wage work, for example, without modifying institutionalized inequalities between men and women in the occupational and wage structure in the field of legislation, education and training, which prevent women from controlling the factors of production to which they may have access in theory, is unlikely to lead to self-sustaining improvement in the situation of rural women.

21. Elderly rural women are identified in the present report as a particularly underprivileged sub-section of the rural population, in terms of paucity of material resources and lack of education and training. Changing demographic structures in developing countries, such as declining mortality, have increased the number of elderly rural women dependent on their families for support, while the increase in the elderly population and the migration of males into urban centres have led to a substantial decrease in the availability of family support

for the elderly females. The analysis set out in section III below indicates that investment in human resources, including recognition of the reproductive activities of young rural women, is the best preventive measure to potential social challenges that may arise out of socio-economic or demographic changes. In order to achieve sustainable improvement in the situation of rural women, policy makers must fully commit themselves to investment in the human resources of the rural female population from birth onwards, adapted to each successive generation and designed to support women throughout their life cycle.

22. Coherent and consistent policy depends on effective cooperation between different levels of policy-making bodies. While it is the central policy maker's role to set minimum standards and conditions for a fair social environment, including rules against discrimination, institutional linkages determine, to a great extent, the success or failure of the translation of those policies into practice. The establishment or strengthening of institutional linkages among the external aid agencies, women's national machineries, other governmental and non-governmental institutions and local rural development institutions, particularly at the grass-roots level, is an important step towards enhancing local capacities. Emphasis could be placed on grass-roots, community-based institutions, which are more accessible to rural women than larger, local or national organizations, and on developing women's leadership skills and ability to voice their demands in public arenas.

23. Experience has demonstrated that the programming and implementation of agricultural projects is carried out most effectively by ministries of agriculture assisted and monitored by special women's units or focal points. To ensure that rural women are integrated into, and benefit from, national development policies and programmes, it is important to establish the units at those provincial and district levels that would link national machineries at the central level with rural women at the grass-roots level. Those machineries should monitor the status of rural women and facilitate the work of non-governmental organizations and government departments, particularly in formulating legal literacy programmes for rural women and in food production, income-generating activities and increasing their access to productive resources.

24. Training for staff in gender issues should be an integral part of the programme to strengthen national machineries and establish institutional linkages with rural development institutions. The integration of gender issues into the planning process would enable policy makers to clarify fundamental concepts relating to gender by identifying the daily tasks of women and men and differentiating between their productive and reproductive activities.

25. Programmes and projects for women, particularly in rural areas, should be viewed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Women's contribution to the agricultural economy is essential to both food security and rural development. Programmes and projects aimed at improving the situation of women in rural areas, therefore, should be part of the overall development plan of the Government, particularly in developing countries.

III. TRENDS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: REVIEW AND APPRAISAL (1980-1992)

26. Despite the growing awareness of Governments of the need for strategies and programmes to improve the situation of rural women, only a few countries have initiated significant policies and programmes at the national level that specifically target rural women for participation and benefits. A careful review of policy, programmes and projects concerned with rural development in the past decade shows that there are lessons to be learnt from both success and failure. Some of those lessons will be examined in this section.

A. Progress in the establishment of women's national machinery for integrating women in rural development

27. The establishment or strengthening of women's national machinery should lie at the core of rural development strategies. National machinery is defined as any organizational structure established with particular responsibility for the advancement of women and the elimination of discrimination against women at the national level. Such structures have usually taken the following forms: (a) ministries or under-secretaries of State for women's affairs; (b) units located in or affiliated with ministries dealing with labour and social affairs; (c) units located in or affiliated with ministries dealing with agriculture and economic planning; (d) advisory bodies such as women's bureaux, national councils or national commissions; and (e) women's wings or units affiliated to the national ruling party.

28. With the exception of the national machinery located in or affiliated with ministries of agriculture, however, attempts by most national machinery to implement food and agricultural development programmes and projects for rural women have generally met with, at best, very modest success. The main reasons are insufficient human and financial resources, the lack of a country-wide network of regional or local branches and, especially, scarcity of technical expertise. 5/ This lack of expertise contributed to the low status of women's national machinery among other government agencies and to the isolation of separate women's units from the programmes and field activities of the sectoral ministries.

29. The net result was for such national machinery to design and implement small income-generating projects, principally in what are considered the main activities of rural women, such as vegetable gardens or small-scale livestock production. They did not address rural women's needs with regard to their primary agricultural responsibilities in food production. That approach, therefore, has generally been inadequate in providing rural women with a regular, sustainable and significant income.

30. In order to strengthen national machineries so that women's concerns are adequately addressed, it is first necessary to ensure the participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

1. Increasing the participation of women in the decision-making process

31. It has been recognized that the significant contribution of women to their national economies has been underestimated and undervalued. One of the main reasons for the weak performance of women's national machinery is the absence of women in the decision-making process at all levels, grass-roots, local and national. The latest available data indicate that only 3.5 per cent of the world's cabinet ministers are women, and men maintain their dominance in such key areas as defence, economic policy and political affairs in all regions of the world. 6/ Few women head agriculture ministries.

32. In many countries, a starting-point has been to identify clearly the obstacles to women's participation in decision-making at all levels. The next step has been to increase public awareness about rural women's rights. Several organizations of the United Nations system, in collaboration with national Governments in developing countries, have been active in promoting awareness of women's rights among the rural population through the mass media, by means, for example, of educational radio programmes. There has also been a growing recognition among policy makers at all levels that improving the economic condition of rural women can bring about an improvement in their status that would, in turn, lead to their enhanced participation in decision-making at all levels. Another method used in many countries was to make available for rural women time-saving technologies that enabled them to devote more time to social, educational and political activities.

33. The project activities of a number of organizations of the United Nations system include the integration of women's issues in national development plans, policies and programmes, and upgrading women's capability in decision-making, project preparation and evaluation. For example, projects implemented by some regional commissions include improvement of the legal and institutional framework to facilitate the incorporation of rural women in all stages of development. 7/

34. Although some progress has been made, through access to local groups and organizations, by the Member States and the organizations of the United Nations system, the representation of rural women in political parties, governmental posts and people's organizations has not been adequate to ensure that they fully benefit from the development of their communities or nation. Much still needs to be done. Increasing the participation of rural women in the decision-making process is a crucial part of rural development strategies, but it is only part of the development process towards improving the situation of rural women. Increased participation of women in community-based activities and the strengthening of institutional linkages among organizations concerned with rural development remain two of the most important components of any rural policies that aim at improving the situation of women.

2. Increased community-based participation

35. The lack of an effective implementation mechanism at the grass-roots level has been identified as one of the main reasons for the failure of programmes and projects that attempted to increase the income-earning potential of rural women. Formation of groups for women as well as mixed-gender groups is an effective

method for increasing women's role in decision-making and ensuring recognition of their participation in the community. Community development organizations at the grass-roots level and mutual aid societies are particularly effective. Such groups not only increase rural women's visibility at the local level by representing and safeguarding women's right to participate in community decisions, but also enable women to learn management skills and methods for earning and saving income.

36. Women in groups often have more bargaining power than individual women in requesting access to land, credit, agricultural services, extension and training. For example, in some countries in Africa, national women's groups are in the process of establishing branches in rural areas while existing rural organizations are strengthening their links with national associations. A few countries in Asia have established a network of organizations, including credit and savings unions, at the grass-roots level which specifically address the causes of rural poverty and organize rural women collectively. In a few countries in Latin America, women's non-governmental organizations are particularly active in assisting peasant women in marketing and in improving their conditions through education and self-help organizations.

37. Action is needed in three main fields to ensure increased participation of rural women in the community, namely (a) promotion of the establishment of women's and mixed-gender local organizations such as cooperatives, farmer's self-help associations, and credit and savings unions; (b) promotion of training programmes for women's associations and enhancement of their capacity for dialogue and negotiation; and (c) encouragement of women leaders to undertake community actions and collective initiatives, particularly in agriculture, forestry and communal fish farming.

3. Institutional linkages

38. Appropriate institutional linkages are essential for ensuring the success of rural development policies. The women's national machinery, located in or affiliated with ministries of agriculture, as a centralized government planning agency responsible for rural development policy-making, has a crucial role to play in the coordination and strengthening of institutional linkages, particularly with agricultural and rural development institutions.

39. One of the main objectives of the projects funded by several organizations of the United Nations system is institution building and staff training. In some African countries, specific projects were implemented whose main purpose was to strengthen the women's national machinery in order to improve the capacity of those institutions to execute, coordinate and apply research on women's employment, health and legal status. A joint project of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, in a francophone African country involved strengthening the capacity-building of the nationwide women's organization to promote the status of women. 7/

40. It should be borne in mind that a comprehensive rural development strategy would require massive amounts of funds, particularly at the initial stages. Funds are needed for the administrative reforms required to establish the system of institutional linkages referred to above, as well as for the upgrading of

existing institutions themselves, for example by recruitment of qualified staff and investment in research facilities. Although the Government is perceived to be the obvious provider of funds, in the case of most developing countries it seems unrealistic in these recessionary times to expect the Government to be the only source of funds.

41. The international organizations and donor agencies concerned with rural development could have a crucial role to play in furthering the process of improvement of the situation of rural women, particularly in developing countries, by providing at least some of the funds as well as the necessary expert advice. More importantly, they could be catalysts in establishing linkages among the main institutions which deal with rural development, including grass-roots organizations.

42. The provision of policy advice to Governments on the planning of programmes and projects to address both women's and men's specific concerns in the rural sector is taking on an ever-increasing importance in the work of the organizations of the United Nations system and of the international donor agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned with rural development.

B. Gender analysis

43. Policy makers are increasingly using gender analysis. This reflects a broader concern with women's roles and responsibilities in relation to those of men, since gender analysis examines both female and male roles within their social, political, economic and ecological environments. A major advantage of gender analysis is that it promotes an improvement in the situation of women and men, thus undermining the argument that programmes and projects concerned with improving the situation of women tend to overlook the needs of men. Moreover, gender analysis can easily be applied to development projects.

44. The main objective of gender analysis is to clarify fundamental concepts relating to gender and sustainable development, including environment and planning. This involves identifying the daily tasks of men and women in developing countries and differentiating between their productive and reproductive activities.

45. The poor integration of gender issues into national development plans arises from the way in which development is conceptualized and public policy is analysed. Even broad concepts of development, which include improvements in social indicators such as reduced infant mortality and increased life expectancy and school enrolment, remain based in the production of commodities. The process of human reproduction, including the raising of children, nursing of the sick, caring for the old, collection of fuel and water, preparation of food, and the general maintenance of the home is left out of account. This is of particular relevance for rural women in developing countries since their share of reproductive work tends to be greater than that of urban women and women living in industrialized countries. A critical issue for women in general and for rural women in particular is how reproductive work is articulated with access to an income. Generally, reproductive work does not include an entitlement to an independent income.

46. In the area of institutional development, for example, the first step of a gender analysis framework would comprise a diagnosis of the gender issue in the traditional rural production and distribution structure. A thorough evaluation of institutional structures could be made only after analysis of the current economic activities of the majority of the rural population by gender category, and the extent and quality of the involvement of rural women in the traditional production structure.

47. The effectiveness of institutions to promote rural development and improve the situation of women could then be analysed in the light of the importance of such institutions to the traditional production system. The substantive issues to consider would include identification of the type of formal/informal associations, their economic and social purpose, their membership by gender and constitution, the rules for access to membership and leadership positions and whether those rules are gender-biased, linkages with similar groups or associations and their financial condition.

48. Recently, international organizations and donor agencies concerned with rural development have been reassessing the utility of relying solely on women in development projects to bring about an improvement in the status of rural women. The basic long-term concern of programmes and projects in rural areas for women should be to promote activities that will not be made marginal by development. However, women in development projects often aim to increase the productivity of women's typical tasks, which may perpetuate the marginal productivity of women. 8/ It is therefore essential that rural development projects that aim to improve the situation of women first identify long-term development trends in rural areas.

49. Another problem associated with women in development projects arises from their sensitivity to women's normative roles. 8/ The example may be cited of a project in an African country where tribal rules prevent individual women from owning sheep. The solution was simply to organize women into groups so that the sheep became their collective property. 9/ Although on the surface the project appears to be successful, it should be borne in mind that such measures are merely temporary, and that those who implement projects, need to work hand-in-hand with policy makers to bring about changes in the socio-economic fabric that eventually would place women on an equal footing with men. That objective is not inconsistent with the role of women in transmitting local cultures.

50. Gender-sensitive mainstream projects are therefore a more effective way to reach large numbers of women and ensure them of significant benefits. Recent studies indicate that women-only projects, particularly in rural areas, tend to have a minimal effect, largely owing to their small budgets, low government priority and lack of appropriate technical skills by project management staff. 5/

51. The main advantage of gender analysis is that it allows in-depth analysis of the specific constraints facing both rural men and women, such as different levels of income, different propensities to save and invest, different consumption patterns, different levels of aversion to risk and different levels of access to productive resources. Those disparities are highly pronounced within the rural household and condition, to a great extent, the manner in which women and men respond to different opportunities offered by rural development programmes and projects. Understanding the factors responsible for the

inequitable distribution of benefits and the gender-differentiated contribution to productive activities is a basic prerequisite for the success of rural development strategies. Examples of gender analysis methods are incorporated in the analysis, in the following sections, of programmes and projects targeted at human resources development of rural women and access to resources.

C. Human resources development

52. Although in a number of countries programmes have been implemented that fostered the development of rural women's human capital, mainly through the provision of health and education services, the contribution of women's reproductive activities to the development process have largely been ignored. In many other countries, particularly in the developing regions, the issues of education and training and the health of the rural population had not received adequate attention.

53. International donor agencies, United Nations organizations and the specialized agencies have, since the mid-1980s, helped train women selected by local women's groups to be promoters in rural development and organize their own groups. In addition to the provision of training in literacy, nutrition and improving housing and environmental conditions, those projects assist the women in earning income and teach them how to gain access to funding and technical assistance at both the community and national levels. Special training programmes for government officials on integrating women into the process of rural development have also been implemented in the Latin America region. 10/

54. It has been observed that, in many countries, rural women who participate in income-generating projects express more interest in information on family planning and child nutrition than do non-participants. Women who have access to education tend to delay child-bearing and use family planning. For example, studies indicate that only a third of women who have less than five years of education use contraceptives but for those who stay in school for nine years the proportion rises to three quarters. 11/

55. In many regions of the world, there is still a tendency to send boys to school while girls are expected to stay at home to look after their younger siblings and help their mothers. The world's 40 poorest countries have made great advances in expanding primary education over the last 25 years; however, on the average, boys still outnumber girls by almost a quarter. 11/ The latest available data indicate that girls between the ages of 10 and 14 contribute 22 per cent of the family labour, while boys in the same age group contribute only 6 per cent. 9/

56. In order to change the situation, not only do the curricula of the overall education system need to be improved, but the vocational and other training programmes in rural development institutions also need to be reorganized. An increase in female enrolment must be accompanied by appropriate curricula, for both girls and boys, in terms of the skills taught and keeping in view future employment possibilities. Education programmes in rural areas should include courses on farming methods, resource management, health, nutrition, legal rights of rural women and courses on family planning for both women and men.

57. Furthermore, while designing human resources development policies targeted at rural women, the feedback relationship between women, health and sustainable development should be borne in mind. Women, particularly in rural areas, are the main providers of health care to their families. Although much progress has been made in the provision of primary health care for rural women in many countries, much still needs to be done. Studies indicate some evidence of gender discrimination in access to health care: in rural areas of many developing countries, boys are more likely to be brought in to clinics and hospitalized than girls, despite equal incidence of infection and availability of free clinical care. 12/

58. In some developing countries, health programmes that have been particularly successful in recent years included activities related to the development of human resources for health concerning women as both health beneficiaries and providers. Most of those programmes were implemented under the auspices of the ministry of health in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The aim of the programmes was to identify and enhance the potential of women's organizations in maternal and child health and family planning programmes. 7/

59. Gender discrimination, through unequal access of women and girls to health care and education and training opportunities, often leads to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. The first consequence of this interaction between gender and poverty is the children's nutritional status. Malnutrition has particularly severe consequences in the first years of life, affecting mental development and morbidity and mortality. Child-bearing can often be fatal for rural women because of their limited access to nutrition and health care. In many developing countries, where maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the world, women who have not been successful in producing healthy children, particularly healthy sons, are usually under pressure from their families to undergo a succession of closely spaced births, increasing their risk of premature death. That risk is compounded by the fact that, often, those women lack access to professional health care, and sometimes suffer from anaemia. 13/

D. The effects of demographic changes on rural women

60. Recent decades have seen a fall in the average mortality rate and a rise in average life expectancy in developing countries. An increasing trend of rural to urban migration has been observed at the same time, which is typically labour dominant and has produced an outflow of young, mostly male, workers to the urban centres. The main effect of the recent demographic changes has been an ageing of the rural population.

61. Elderly women, under this scenario, have been placed in a particularly disadvantaged situation. Studies indicate that the traditional role and status of elderly women in developing countries are likely to be strongly challenged by recent demographic developments. First, with declining mortality, widowhood occurs at an older age at which the potential for economic activity and a positive contribution to family welfare is reduced. Secondly, there is a high risk that the female elderly will continue to face a substantial decrease in the availability of family support as a result of marital instability, migration or population ageing. 14/

62. The demographic changes have resulted in a substantial decrease in economic support for the ageing rural population, which has affected elderly women more adversely than elderly men because of the general tendency of males to control income. Moreover the outflow of young wage-earners from rural areas has tended to contribute to both marital instability and a breakdown of the extended family as a care-taking device, which has had adverse effects particularly on the very old and the very young.

63. Elderly rural women not only provide care for children, thus enabling the young rural women to work outside the home, but also form the backbone of the food-farming population in many developing countries. In many countries of the world, elderly rural women also engage in marketing activities and handicrafts, producing objects for household use or for sale to supplement the household budget. The significant contribution of elderly women to their families and to the economy goes largely unrecognized, however.

64. The gravest disadvantage of the present generation of elderly women in most developing countries, particularly those living in rural areas, is their lack of formal education. This has important policy implications. Without education and training, women in general and rural women in particular are likely to be ignored by the mainstream of national development efforts and liable to receive less than their due for their contribution to the economy. It may be concluded that education is a crucial variable in development, not only in its own right but also because it is related to occupation, income, fertility and mortality behaviour as well as health status, health practices, political awareness and participation. Furthermore, it is essential for policy makers to recognize the vital contribution that all rural women, including the elderly, make to their families and communities through their reproductive activities.

65. Increasing the social and economic role of women, through investment in human resources from birth onwards, is therefore the best preventive response to possible social challenges arising from socio-demographic changes. The advancement of women is not limited to the elimination of discrimination, which often comes as a corrective measure, nor is it limited to prevention of discrimination. It has to go beyond such a narrow approach to become an upstream investment in human resources, adapted to each successive generation. Only then can the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the disadvantaged situation of rural women be slowed down and finally stopped. 15/

66. Education and training have strong linkages with accessibility and control of factors of production. Women living in rural areas who have obtained some measure of education and training tend to have a greater capacity than those without education or training to negotiate credit and access to land and other factors of production, and to manage their earnings from income-generating activities.

E. Access to and control of productive resources

67. Increasing women's awareness of their rights, particularly in the case of rural women, is one of the essential means identified for improving their situation. Although progress has been made in some countries in ensuring the gender neutrality of legislation, effective implementation and enforcement are

lacking. The raising of women's awareness and knowledge of their legal rights is the first step towards increasing their access to and control of productive resources and improving their opportunities for income-generating activities.

1. Increased awareness of women of their rights, including legal literacy

68. Learning about rights and the proper utilization of the legal system in order to achieve those rights has been termed "legal literacy". Consequently, programmes to develop legal literacy for women have been identified as a major means for achieving the goal of gender equality. 16/

69. In some countries the rights of women, particularly those living in rural areas, have been defined at the national level in ways not relevant to their social, economic and cultural experiences and the reality of their lives. Often, even in countries where women have rights and have access to their rights, many women cannot exercise their rights because of economic, cultural or political factors, educational limitations, social conditioning and the administration of justice.

70. A process of legal literacy informed by a gender perspective would significantly contribute to a betterment of the situation of women, particularly rural women, since they are the most disadvantaged as a group in terms of lack of opportunity. For legal literacy to achieve that objective it must be conceived in a dynamic political and economic framework. Specific recommendations to policy makers on how to improve legal literacy for rural women are outlined in section II above. The role of legal literacy is to help women, particularly in rural areas, to understand that their rights and the exercise of their rights are a resource for their personal and social development and empowerment. Improvement of the legal literacy of rural women acquires a critical importance when considered in the light of the sharp increase in their poverty and consequent worsening of their situation world wide.

2. Poverty and households headed by females

71. With the alarming increase in the number of rural women living in poverty, it has now become more urgent than ever to assure those women greater access to factors of production. The latest available data show that the numbers of rural women living in poverty in the developing countries have increased by almost 50 per cent over the past 20 years to 565 million: 374 million in Asia, 130 million in Africa, 43 million in Latin America and the Caribbean and 18 million in the Near East and north Africa. 11/

72. The strong interlinkage between gender and poverty is evidenced by the rising numbers of households headed by females, particularly in the rural sector. Female headship emerged as an early indicator of women's poverty because it was the only one that was visible in household-based approaches to poverty. A study estimated that in the developing world between 10 and 30-40 per cent of all households fell into this category. 17/

73. Households recorded as having a female head encompass disparate household economies and family structures. There is an important distinction between female-managed, where women manage household economies on behalf of an absent male head and female-maintained, where women are the main economic contributors. Studies on the subject have shown that households maintained primarily by women, particularly in the rural sector, are likely to be among the poorest in most societies. 17/

74. The magnitude of the problem derives partly from social and family instability, as a consequence of war, civil disturbance, over-rapid urbanization and male migration, and partly from the increasing difficulty of gaining access to factors of production. The rapid increase in poverty, particularly in the rural areas, is also affected by government cutbacks in health, education and social services that were part of the remedial measures of structural adjustment policies. For example, World Bank statistics show that 37 of the world's poorest countries cut their health budgets by half by the mid-1980s.

3. Women, environment and development

75. The crucial interrelationship between women, environment and development has been increasingly recognized in recent years. In most developing countries, particularly in Africa, food production is undertaken mainly by women, and therefore issues related to food security, land rights and environmentally sustainable land use practices are central to their lives.

76. Several United Nations bodies have been involved in programmes and project activities that include ecologically sound resource management objectives. For example, among the main activities undertaken by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to promote the involvement of women in environmental issues was the establishment of the Senior Women's Advisory Group and support, since 1988, of the Global General Assembly of Women and the Environment. 7/ At the thirty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a report of the Secretary-General was presented on women and the environment, under the priority theme of development, 18/ and a draft resolution on women, environment and development was adopted at the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for action by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993. 19/

77. Environmental deterioration has reached significant proportions over the past decade. The main causes are rapid population growth, increased pressure on land, deforestation, shifting cultivation and desertification. The depletion of forestry resources, in particular, has had a significant negative impact on women: first, apart from their value as a productive resource, trees protect the quality of soil and water. Most tropical farming systems are unsustainable without trees as part of the system; secondly, forests provide food, fodder and fibre - products which fall within women's responsibility; thirdly, small-scale enterprises dependent on forestry products are among the major employers of rural women, particularly the landless and resource poor.

78. A National Tropical Forestry Action Plan has been requested by several Governments, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNDP and the World Bank are jointly working on the global ecological implications of desertification and deforestation. Under the Plan of Action to

Combat Desertification, of 1977, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/172 of 19 December 1989, UNEP took a major role in providing assistance to countries in establishing their national plan of action for controlling the process of desertification. A number of United Nations organizations have actively pursued activities to combat deforestation and soil degradation, such as rotation of crops and tree-planting programmes, and to encourage better, sustainable use of forest products. It is essential to learn from rural women about conservation and management of the environment: according to several studies, women have greater knowledge than men of the qualities of forest species. 7/ Although they are the main collectors of fuelwood, women in developing countries often resist the cutting down of trees and cut down branches instead for as long as possible. According to the reports of specialized agencies concerned with rural development, women's groups in some countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, with appropriate training in forestry, tree planting and the management of plantations, have helped create new forest lands. 9/

4. Access to technology

79. New agricultural technologies should be accessible, preferably utilizing local material, and environmentally sound, and they should maximize efficiency without threatening women's and men's jobs in the rural sector. New agricultural technologies include new crop varieties and breeds of livestock, and improved tools, cultivation methods and/or mechanization practices. A number of United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and regional commissions have implemented projects that have strengthened women's capabilities in the use of new technologies through training and participation. 7/

80. A review of projects over the past decade reveals that technology, if not carefully evaluated before use, can, in some cases, have unforeseen negative effects on women. In many parts of the developing world, the mechanization of agriculture, for example the use of tractors, has resulted in the masculinization of modern agriculture and the feminization of labour in subsistence agriculture or on family farms. Another unforeseen negative impact on women results from certain types of irrigation technology: although irrigation technology can increase crop production and make water more readily available to households and livestock, in some cases it can affect women negatively by increasing the time needed to transplant crops, weed and harvest. New technologies can also be too expensive for resource-poor rural women to buy. One way to solve this problem is to learn from the traditional practices of rural women and minimize the use of expensive technology. For example, the main objective of many projects funded by United Nations organizations, particularly in Africa, was to upgrade traditional food processing without resorting to expensive technology.

5. Access to and control of land

81. Lack of access to land remains one of the main obstacles to the full participation of women in rural development. Inheritance practices, whereby land traditionally passes from father to son, reinforce male control of land. Although many developing countries have passed statutes legally affirming a

woman's fundamental right to own land, in practice female control of land is rare and exceptional. In many countries, land has traditionally been awarded to the male head of household, which has undermined married women's rights to a joint share.

82. In many regions, particularly in Africa, customary rules that are not necessarily enforced through a judicial system, but nevertheless have considerable authority, also tend to favour men over women in land rights. Moreover, in many countries, there is legislative provision for widowed, separated or divorced women. As noted above, promotion of legal literacy can help women obtain their fair land rights.

83. Women's access to land is also impeded by demographic and environmental factors. Recent studies on improving the productivity of women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that, over the past 30 years, efforts to improve women's rights to land have been neutralized by growing population pressure on increasingly depleted land and the fact that, as the quality of the land deteriorates, women are managing smaller plots. 20/

84. The difficulties experienced by rural women in securing access to land are even greater for women heads of households. Review of land reform programmes in various countries indicates that, regardless of whether the sex of the beneficiary is specified by law, women heads of households seldom have access to land even when their productive activities call for it. Without title to land, those women lack the collateral necessary to obtain credit and face difficulties in obtaining extension, since extension agents tend to be reluctant to work with small, isolated plots.

85. In spite of the negative prospects for rural women, some positive and innovative initiatives have been taken in this area that are worth discussing. There has been a major policy change on agrarian reform in recent years, whereby women have often been defined as the beneficiaries, and granted the right to own land either jointly or with men. Legal changes are allowing a small number of women in various developing countries to open bank accounts, take court action on their own or inherit their father's property. Women's national machineries have been particularly successful in this regard in some countries in the Indian subcontinent, Central and South America and west Africa. Moreover some organizations of the United Nations system, particularly the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP), have implemented projects in developing countries in which reclaimed land has been allocated to women, and have targeted projects to benefit marginal and landless women. 7/

86. The improvement of women's legal access to land is a basic prerequisite for the success of rural development policies. Activities that could be considered for the improvement of women's access to and control over land, particularly in developing regions, include legal literacy training for both women and men on women's rights, research on legislative reforms for rural areas, removing barriers to the effective implementation of existing laws, and focusing on ways to improve women's participation in self-help and cooperative groups.

6. Access to credit

87. Women's access to credit is often limited by their lack of collateral, such as land, and their lack of education. In the vast majority of cases, they must rely on their husbands and male relatives, or on money-lenders who tend to charge high interest rates. On the whole, banks have tended to underestimate the productivity of women farmers and their ability to repay loans. World wide, only 7 to 11 per cent of loans go to women, in spite of their excellent repayment record, which is usually higher than that of male farmers. The latest available data indicate that the average repayment rate of rural women in Africa, for example, was as high as 97 per cent. 21/

88. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh constitutes an example of how, with small loans (about US$ 30-240), resource-poor rural women can work towards the betterment of their lives. Since the loans are given to women with little or no collateral, repayment, which is almost 97 per cent, is a point of honour reinforced by peer pressure in the village group to which every borrower must belong.

89. Credit is essential for women to obtain vital agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, as well as to buy tools, procure animal draught power, hire extra labour, construct irrigation systems and take soil and water conservation measures. To be sure, credit alone is not sufficient to guarantee sustainable improvement in women's conditions. It must be accompanied by appropriate technological advice and training, and applied research, particularly in sectors that are of concern to women, including traditional food crops such as cassava, cowpeas, sorghum, millet, plantain and sweet potatoes, which provide up to two thirds of family nutrition, small livestock and poultry and home vegetable gardens.

90. In a few African and Asian countries, savings and credit schemes have recently been introduced by some of the specialized agencies concerned with rural development in collaboration with a financing institution, under which farmer groups, consisting of 80 per cent women, receive intensive training in crop selection, methods of planting and cultivation, fertilizer application and harvesting. Training is also provided in group interaction, participatory production planning, group record-keeping and evaluation of the previous season's production and activities. 9/ Loans for women's groups have the added advantage of reaching the poorest women, who taken individually would be ineligible. Indeed, the specialized agencies concerned with rural development have increasingly focused their efforts on devising ways of making credit available to women. For example, since 1984, 86 per cent of IFAD projects have included credit for women, compared to only 27 per cent for the period from 1978 to 1984. Local conditions are examined to determine the most effective mechanisms for reaching the poorest women. 21/

91. Some developing countries have reported enhancement of their policies to increase rural women's access to financial services and technical assistance through schemes such as promotion of financial institutions that design plans of action for increasing women's access to financial services; encouraging documentation and exchange of experiences among financial institutions on innovative credit schemes which provide easier access to rural women; development of options for financial services, technical assistance, training and resources with special attention to rural women's needs; establishment of

closer links with women bankers in those financial institutions that receive loans from international organizations, including organizations of the United Nations system.

92. The importance of ensuring access to credit, for both on-farm and off-farm activities, should not be underestimated. Analysis of projects of various United Nations organizations over the past decade has shown that the impact of credit availability can be dramatic, both on family well-being and on the community at large. Apart from the economic advantage of increased productivity and higher income, the increase in women's earning power has a tremendous effect on their self-confidence. Increased self-esteem has often led women to enrol in education programmes and to insist on having a greater role in community activities - initiatives that previously they would never have considered.

7. Access to extension

93. The latest available data indicate that although women represent up to 80 per cent of the food producers in some countries, they receive only 2 to 13 per cent of the extension services. On the whole, in the area of extension, the needs of women farmers have largely been overlooked: only 3 per cent of extension organizations' time and resources are allocated to women in Asia, and only 5 per cent in the whole world. 22/ Moreover, agricultural training tended in the past to focus on improving export crops, where male farmers predominate. Training with respect to livestock and subsistence crops, where women farmers predominate, has received much less attention.

94. In some regions, cultural constraints limit the recruitment of female extension agents and prevent male extension workers from interacting with women. World wide, the majority of extension workers tend to be male: for example, only 7 per cent of all agricultural extension staff in Africa are women, and for the entire world the figure is only 13 per cent. 22/

95. To redress this situation, extension systems should consider increasing gender awareness by addressing gender concerns in surveys and by training extension agents, both male and female, in gender issues and gender-disaggregated needs assessment; they should collect gender-disaggregated data on agricultural activities and constraints and use the data to design, implement and monitor extension activities. To bring extension to rural women, complete and correct information on women farmers in the region must first be obtained. One way of communicating extension advice to female producers would be through working groups of rural women, taking extension activities to women's sites if possible and adopting approaches to the fragmented pattern of women's time allocation.

96. Some countries in South-East Asia, southern and north Africa have successfully recruited and trained female extension workers as a means of reaching women farmers. In a few countries, moreover, male extension agents receive specific guidance on working with women farmers. Training programmes for women, however, tend to emphasize domestic rather than agricultural skills although both are relevant and need to be combined.

8. Access to income-generating activities: rural micro-businesses, marketing, livestock raising

97. Aside from the immense and unrecognized economic value of household activities, women are also responsible for a large portion of the mainstream economic activities of rural families. Indeed, the smaller the farm and poorer the family, the more significant are women's economic contributions. A recent survey of 114 developing countries indicates that, world wide, 67 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture and produce 55 per cent of the food of the developing world. 23/ In Africa, women produce an estimated 70 per cent of the continent's food; in Latin America, the small family farms, where women account for half the income, account for 41 per cent of the region's domestically consumed agricultural products and 32 per cent of its agricultural exports. 22/

98. Faced with their dual responsibilities in the areas of family formation and family livelihood, which involve earning a living and taking care of family members, women generally work longer hours than men. The official statistics on female participation in the labour force capture only some dimensions of women's work and not the full range of the tasks they perform. As shown in studies done for the International Labour Organisation, there has been a systematic tendency in population census figures to underestimate the levels of female participation in the labour force because much of the women's work in rural areas is counted as unpaid family labour, owing to its seasonal and intermittent nature. 17/

99. A large and growing number of rural women are pursuing off-farm employment. In most cases, the women have little or no access to land or live in ecologically fragile environments where farming or livestock raising is limited. Off-farm employment is therefore an attractive - sometimes the only - alternative. Although many of those women are employed as wage labourers on large farms or in the local factories, employment is often only temporary and wages low. Self-employment through small-scale enterprises run by women, either individually or in groups, presents a much better option in terms of providing a reliable source of income and economic self-reliance.

100. Studies indicate that the greater the amount of income under women's control, the greater the amount devoted to the children's health and nutrition. Moreover, income-generating activities tend to give women a higher status within the family. These two observations have led to a strong recommendation for increasing women's participation in income-generating activities. 24/

9. Small-scale rural enterprises, food processing and marketing

101. In many developing countries, a high percentage of rural micro-businesses that cater to local needs are controlled or owned by women. In Latin America, for example, women own between a third and half of all small rural enterprises. In that region, it is estimated that between 20 and 35 per cent of those rural households that live above the poverty line are able to do so largely because of those women's contributions to the family welfare. 21/ Those enterprises tend to be relatively small ventures, have informal structures, flexibility, low capital needs, modest educational requirements and high labour intensity. The overwhelming majority depend on local raw materials and cater to local markets.

102. The variety of enterprises that women have set up or improved with the help of United Nations organizations, the specialized agencies or international donor agencies is quite wide, ranging from various types of trading to crop processing, from handicrafts and other cottage industries to services. In some South-East Asian countries, for example, rural credit projects funded by various United Nations organizations (the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), FAO, IFAD, UNIFEM) have enabled women to engage in making textiles and rattan furniture, and in handloom weaving. The most successful projects have addressed the needs of rural women through a combination of income-generation, social development and training in loan management and marketing activities. 7/

103. Women in rural areas are active participants in retail trading and marketing, particularly where trade is traditional and not highly commercialized or industrialized. In much of Asia, women market foods such as vegetables; in west Africa, they distribute most major commodities, and in the Caribbean women account for nearly all local marketing. Moreover, through their marketing efforts, women provide valuable links between farms, consumer goods and buyers.

104. Assessment of rural development programmes and projects shows that, in some societies, the tendency of the male head of household to control all income might encourage women to hide their marketing activities, thus limiting their access to more lucrative markets. Particularly in societies where there is strict segregation of the sexes, women are often compelled to rely on their children for marketing, thus restricting their marketing activities to the local market and reducing the amount to be sold.

105. Application of gender analysis in the assessment of rural enterprises would contribute greatly to the promotion of productivity and lead to sustainable improvement in the situation of rural women. The first step would involve a ranking of prevailing types of enterprises that would then be used to determine which types are more popular among women by life cycle of woman, family status and whether she is the head of household. Once these data are compared with those for men, types of enterprises could be identified that are to be targeted for reaching resource-poor women at different stages of their life cycle. Studies made of the marketing circuits of different products and services should be used to identify the points where it would be strategically possible to minimize intermediary transaction costs for gender-specific managed enterprises.

106. The next step would include assessment of the enterprises' financial viability. Studies of different types of micro enterprises (those managed by women and men singly, mixed group enterprises and family enterprises) that measure returns to labour and other investments should be analysed to determine how income varies per labour input and where the labour constraints are on enterprise expansion and/or profit growth by gender of labourer. Moreover, credit options should be evaluated to assess the extent of demand determined by the gender of the borrower. Hidden costs to enterprises arising from government price regulations, taxes, registration permits and procedures must also be calculated in order to evaluate how those costs could be minimized by means of alternative policies for informal sector enterprise operations, particularly so that the development of women's enterprises could be encouraged.

10. Livestock and poultry farming and fisheries

107. The extent of women's ownership and control of livestock varies from region to region and country to country. In the Indian subcontinent, for example, women are responsible for 60 to 80 per cent of the feeding and milking of large animals such as cattle. When large animals are penned and fed, caring for them tends to fall within the domestic responsibilities of women. In general, poultry and animals such as sheep and goats are an important economic resource for women because they are often the only source of income fully under their control. Moreover, poultry and small animals tend to contribute to a greater extent to the diet of low-income groups than do larger animals such as cattle.

108. Dairy development training programmes set up by one specialized agency, which enabled women to participate in dairy cooperatives, have enjoyed a marked degree of success in the area of small-scale animal production. In one country in Africa, for example, the dairy cooperatives have not only doubled the production of milk, but also marketed their own cheese to hotels and local restaurants. Training in cheese-making enabled the women to preserve milk that otherwise would have spoiled. 9/

109. Although some United Nations organizations have implemented projects in many developing regions on livestock production, few livestock extension programmes include women. Another problem is the scarcity of livestock production centres. One mountainous Asian country reported that it had only one centre to serve an entire district, which, given the vast and difficult distances, made it impossible to give courses in livestock care to women's groups in villages around the periphery. To alleviate this problem, more locally based development offices need to be established. Yet another problem that needs to be given priority is the deteriorating ecology in many developing countries. Although in a few countries trees have been planted and eroded land reclaimed, most countries are faced with an overall critical shortage of firewood and fodder.

110. In many developing countries, fishing is a major economic activity. While men usually fish, women process and market the catch. Several United Nations bodies (IFAD, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the World Bank) have conducted studies, held seminars and implemented projects on fisheries and coastal development. For example, the World Bank had included, in its fisheries projects, special measures on improving the status of women and involving them in the project's activities. 7/

111. Application of gender analysis in livestock raising would enable policy makers to identify more clearly the gender dimensions in the production process, feeding systems, market outlets, movements in prices, demand and supply, net income per labour input and the ecosystem. Information concerning the livestock activities carried out by the household, including the sex and family status of the manager, and those responsible for fodder, feeding and reproduction activities, must be the starting-point. The next step would include evaluation of the present ecological system, for current livestock numbers and production systems that are managed singly by women or men or jointly managed. The physical analysis should then be compared with a social analysis - the types of information needed by women and men better to understand

and identify their physical resources and develop their feeding source potentials, within the livestock production households.

112. Analysis of the ecological system is of particular importance since land use and the feeding system determine the amount of livestock production that can be sustained without adverse effects on the environment and, thus, the financial viability of livestock production. Analysis of the feeding system should also include an evaluation of the rights of males and females to fodder trees and tree tenure.

113. In the light of the above analysis, and taking into account seasonal patterns of livestock production and crop production, appropriate timetables should be devised for setting up training programmes for women and men, to address specific types of problems faced by each.

Notes

1/ As at 1 June 1993, reports had been received from Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States of America and Venezuela. A report from Australia was expected.

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6/ The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 1970-1990 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3).

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13/ Naila Kabeer, "Gender dimensions of rural poverty", The Journal of Peasant Studies, vol. 18, No. 2 (January 1991).

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16/ Report of Expert Group Meeting on Increased Awareness by Women of Their Legal Rights, including Legal Literacy, Bratislava, 18-22 May 1992 (EGM/IAWR/1992/1).

17/ Report of the Secretary-General on women in extreme poverty: integration of women's concerns in national development planning (E/CN.6/1993/3).

18/ E/CN.6/1992/9.

19/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 7 (E/1993/27).

20/ Contribution of FAO to the preliminary version of the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development.

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